

# Iowa regents will mull eight more efficiency ‘opportunities’ in October

## Public hearings planned for university campuses

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IOWA CITY — The Board of Regents will convene for a special meeting Oct. 2 to discuss eight more cost-saving, revenue-generating, or efficiency “opportunities” uncovered during a sweeping review of its universities.

Those eight potential efficiencies in the areas of human resources, finance, information technology, and facilities will add to four others the board already has approved and is working to implement. After the board’s October meeting, it will hold public hearings at the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the University of Northern Iowa on Oct. 16 and 17.

Following the hearings, University presidents will compile and review public feedback, share it via Facebook, and address issues and questions. In November, at a meeting yet to be scheduled, the Board of Regents will vote on how to proceed with those eight opportunities, according to Mark Braun, transportation project manager for the regents’ “Transparent, Inclusive, Efficiency Review.”

Specifics of the new opportunities have not been spelled out, but generally they will look at simplifying how finance processes are performed across the three campuses, revising human resources service delivery models, reducing the use of buildings during off hours and months to save on utilities, and investing in energy-management initiatives.

Recommendations related to information technology include strengthening collaboration between the ITS teams, exploring a variety of streamlined staffing models, standardizing some systems, and using innovative technology to reduce costs.

An example of that could include replacing standard desktop computers and using voice over internet protocol to “enhance quality of service and increase spend effectiveness,” according to regent documents.

More details about each opportunity are expected to be made public in conjunction with the October discussions.

So far, all opportunities being discussed have to do with administrative processes. Academic-related opportunities — including improved use of distance education and better enrollment management practices — previously were identified for further analysis. But the Board of

Regents slowed down that aspect of its study last month after hearing concerns from faculty members who wanted to be involved but felt overwhelmed by the start of fall classes.

The decision to delay the academic portion of the efficiency study resulted in a timing conflict with one of the firms hired as a consultant on the project — KH Consulting. Braun said the academic review will not resume until Deloitte Consulting LLC — the firm heading the full review — finds a replacement for KH.

Earlier this week, the Board of Regents approved implementation of three opportunities: simplifying the search committee processes at the universities; creating a common applicant portal for would-be students interested in more than one of the state schools; and improving a scoring system used to gauge applicants' likelihood at success if admitted — known as the Regent Admission Index.

Those opportunities are aimed more at improving customer service, rather than producing cost savings or new revenue. The Board of Regents Office is working with the three universities to enact the changes.

In August, the board agreed to implement its first opportunity resulting from the efficiency review — improving purchasing practices across the three campuses. Deloitte has projected savings from those changes over the next 18 to 24 months could range from \$16 million to \$40 million, and the board intends to contract with Deloitte to implement its suggestions.

But details of a new contract have not yet been worked out with Deloitte, which the board already has agreed to pay \$3.3 million for its consulting work. A new contract would have to be approved at a public meeting, and officials said that could happen in October.

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